

Sebastopol Planning Commission

Sebastopol City Council

October 3, 2019

To: Sebastopol City Council Members and Planning Commissioners,

Re: City Ventures proposal for housing on 6 acres behind O'Reilly Media

Public Comments
for 10/8/19
Planning Commission
(as of 10/6/19)

I'm writing to request that you require modification of the City Ventures application to preserve at least one acre for the existing Ceres Community Project Garden.

This garden's value is incalculable, providing multiple benefits to our local community and far beyond. Beneficiaries include over 200 youth served each year, the hundreds of patients who are nourished by the high quality food grown there, neighbors and O'Reilly staff who walk by regularly and enjoy the beauty of the garden, thousands of pollinator and other beneficial insects and birds who visit and live in the beautiful habitat borders that are part of the garden ecosystem, and the award winning and incredibly successful Ceres Community Project itself. This organization has become a model youth service project around the country for linking its exceptional skills training programs, both in the kitchen and in the garden, with service to those facing life threatening illness by providing the most positive gift possible – life sustaining food grown, prepared and given with love.

As the recent Climate Strike highlighted, these are very stressful times for youth. Their futures are uncertain at best with climate science pointing towards the loss of much of life as we know it on the planet. School shootings, on-going political scandals, high housing costs and other economic pressures leave many youth with little to hope and much anxiety. And the reliance on technology for information and social exchange removes many youth from connection to the natural world and face-to-face dialogue in a peaceful, positive setting.

The garden is a wonderful antidote to these stressful influences, tangibly demonstrating that healing can and will happen when the earth, plants and people are nurtured. Many youth who participate in this program go on to be leaders and choose to follow paths that provide service to others. It is a truly inspirational garden and should be allowed to remain at this site.

The garden would be an outstanding benefit to the residents of the proposed housing project as well. Around the county "agrihoods" are being built where a farm or community garden is valued as an amenity due to the benefits mentioned above. The city of Santa Clara is building a model agrihood integrating an urban farm with high density affordable housing. <https://www.bisnow.com/silicon-valley/news/affordable-housing/santa-clara-approves-agrihood-citys-largest-affordable-housing-project-97288>.

I hope the City of Sebastopol and City Ventures will look to outstanding win-win-win projects such as these and preserve this critical garden. Affordable, work-force housing is sorely needed but residents also need food, open space and livable neighborhoods. And if we are serious about addressing the climate crisis, we need to grow plants to capture carbon, have rich organic soil to absorb and hold water, and provide islands of habitat so the critters we share our planet with can survive as well.

Sincerely yours,

Wendy Krupnick

Farmer, gardener and SRJC Adjunct Faculty in Sustainable Agriculture
4993 B. Occidental Rd.
Santa Rosa, 95401

Cc: City Ventures

Kari Svanstrom

Subject: FW: Ceres Garden

From: christopher bowers <cjbalive@hotmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, October 5, 2019 9:22 AM

To: christopher bowers <cjbalive@hotmail.com>

Subject: Ceres Garden

Dear City Council members, Planning Commission members, City Ventures, and members of the press-

I'd like to start by saying that back in May I came very close to dying from serious complications of heart surgery. One thing that has been incredibly important to my recovery (both financially and physically since I cannot work currently) is the weekly food deliveries I get from Ceres. This nourishment and the beauty of those who make it, transport it and grow it (almost all volunteers) reminds me how beautiful and caring this community is.

As an activist in the tenant and housing struggles a couple years back (some of you I spoke with collectively and some of you we discussed matters individually) I also understand and support the crucial need for housing.

It is hard for me to understand how the creativity applied to city planning in recent years here in Sebastopol (the barlow, the green bike lanes, the cannabis revenue, the new businesses popping up everywhere, the bike station at the library, etc) could not be applied to this situation. Is it really either a garden or housing? I believe that is a false dichotomy. I would like to see the folks at City Ventures consider the importance of the Ceres Project as an integral and important community service and INCLUDE the preservation of its garden as a part of their housing development. This could have positive effects for both residents of the new housing as well as the city and of course Ceres. Plenty of studies show the social and personal benefits of green space and gardens.

My hope is that the city planners and politicians will be courageous enough to ask City Ventures to have their proposal include this garden as a way to respect the 200-plus youth to which this program teaches vocational skills as well as the many like me who benefit from their work in very direct ways. My hope is that City Ventures would want to truly partner with this community and this would be an obvious and respectful way to do so. Please don't let established community benefits be sidelined in the name of traditional development modalities.

Sincerely,

Christopher Bowers
7316 Bodega Ave.
Sebastopol, CA
95472

Kari Svanstrom

Subject: FW: Ceres Community Project's Garden

-----Original Message-----

From: m oc <moconnellvt@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 5, 2019 3:06 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.org>
Subject: Ceres Community Project's Garden

Dear Sebastopol City Council Members,

I am a volunteer at the Ceres Community Project's Garden in Sebastopol where City Ventures is proposing to put a housing development. This organic garden has provided a valuable program to the youth in the area and to those who receive Ceres meals. If one acre of the proposed housing development could be reserved for the existing garden, a program that has served the community extremely well for years could continue.

Respectfully,
Maureen O'Connell
1111 14th Street, Santa Rosa, CA

JEFFREY S. KROSS

ATTORNEY AT LAW

P.O. Box 2252
Sebastopol, CA 95473-2252
(707) 823-8665

October 6, 2019

VIA E-MAIL

Sebastopol Planning Commission
Sebastopol Youth Annex
425 Morris Street
Sebastopol, CA 95472

RE: Ceres Garden & City Ventures

Dear Planning Commission members et al.:

We are writing concerning City Ventures' proposed development of the area including the current Ceres garden at the O'Reilly Center on Highway 116 in Sebastopol, with hopes the commission will give due consideration to the garden's importance to, and impact on the community and its local youth.

Ceres provides invaluable services to the community in several ways, most importantly by providing healthful, nutritious meals to people with serious health issues. The garden also provides opportunities for high school students to volunteer their services, learn to work in a team environment, and gain a better understanding of what healthful food production entails. Moreover, the garden is a community resource, open to the public, and a model for what a healthy food system looks like, providing soil building, climate mitigation, and an important local food source.

Ceres and the community it serves would suffer a tremendous loss were the garden to be sacrificed to anticipated development in question. We would urge the commission to require City Ventures to find a creative means of including the intact garden, with a minimum size of one acre, in their development plans.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

/s/ JEFFREY S. KROSS
/s/ LINDA L. LEBOVICS

cc: City Ventures; Neysa Hinton; Patrick Slayter; Michael Carnacchi; Sarah Glad Gurney; Una Glass

Kari Svanstrom

Subject: FW: The Ceres Project's Sebastopol Garden

From: Ann Butler <abutler@sonic.net>
Sent: Sunday, October 6, 2019 1:08 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.org>
Subject: The Ceres Project's Sebastopol Garden

To the Sebastopol City Council Members:

The Ceres Community Project unites teen and adult volunteers to prepare and deliver 100,000 meals a year to our neighbors dealing with severe health challenges. At the heart of the Ceres Project is the garden. It provides organic food for our neighbors dealing with cancer and heart disease, among other grave medical conditions, and it is central to the Ceres Project's youth development program, which serves over 200 youth each year in our community. Youth learn how to grow the food they cook in the kitchen. It would be heart-breaking to lose this community treasure. Certainly there could be a compromise to keep the garden intact!

Sincerely,

Ann Butler

Kari Svanstrom

Subject: FW: Ceres Community Project's Garden

-----Original Message-----

From: Thomas Family <abcthomas@sonic.net>
Sent: Sunday, October 6, 2019 1:12 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.org>
Subject: Ceres Community Project's Garden

October 6, 2019

Dear Sebastopol City Council Members,

Please take the time to figure out a way that the Ceres garden can be saved. This garden is a place of peace, love, hope and goodwill in the community. The care and diligent attention given to the land by Sara, other mentors and Ceres teens has resulted in an amazingly abundant garden that inspires health and well being. So many clients mention in letters of gratitude how a colorful flower bouquet from the garden is a welcome uplift, and that food from the garden has helped them cope better through their illness. Teens who volunteer in the garden learn to connect with nature, and develop practical skills that will serve them throughout their lives. New tenants of the proposed housing development would benefit by having this beautiful garden in their back yard.

The Ceres garden is a precious community resource. If you haven't already, please take a walk over there and you will see what I mean.

Thank You,

Rebecca Thomas

Ceres Volunteer

Kari Svanstrom

Subject: FW: ceres garden

From: Jeffrey Palk <jpalk191@wscuhd.k12.ca.us>

Sent: Monday, October 7, 2019 8:54 AM

To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.org>

Subject: ceres garden

The ceres garden shouldn't be taken down because it serves so many people in good ways. It provides healthy, free food for people who are very ill and diseased. Not only just ill people though, anyone can stop by the garden and get healthy food.

Kari Svanstrom

Subject: FW: O'Reilly Development Proposal/ Ceres Garden

Sent: Sunday, October 6, 2019 1:52 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.org>
Subject: O'Reilly Development Proposal/ Ceres Garden

Dear members of the Sebastopol City Council,

Please see below the letter submitted to the Sebastopol Planning Commission and the project developer, City Ventures.

Please support the important work of the Ceres Community Garden and urge their gardens be incorporated into the plans of City Ventures,

Thanks,

Alan Siegle
Shelley Brown

To City Ventures,

We understand you are considering a development proposal for the land located near the O'Reilly offices in Sebastopol.

We would strongly encourage you to recognize the incredible garden project that Ceres Community Project has created on a portion of the area you are proposing to develop. We strongly encourage you to include the Ceres Community Garden as part of your proposal.

Not only does this garden provide healthy, organic food for people dealing with life-threatening illnesses, it also provides a hands-on life-changing educational program for hundreds of high school students. These young people are given an opportunity to learn life skills as they are growing quality food for those who are most in need. We would suggest that someone looking to buy or rent a living space in your planned development would be attracted to having the Ceres garden as a neighbor and a resource for the greater community. Your support of the Ceres garden would also signal your intention to be good community members.

When the garden was initially proposed and developed, we donated thousands of dollars worth of compost and mulch. Building fertile soil in the midst of a city requires a huge investment of time, energy and soil amendments. It is not something one can just pick up and move.

Ceres started as a small local project, and has grown to include similar projects in other communities. Here in Sonoma County, there is tremendous support for Ceres, as evidenced by the number of lives it touches every day and also by its incredible yearly fundraising. You have the opportunity to join this worthy cause or alienate it's staunch advocates. We cannot imagine a more appropriate component of your development than the current Ceres Community Garden, which is a tremendous resource to the people of Sonoma County.

Thank You,

Alan Siegle

Shelley Brown

Kari Svanstrom

Subject: FW: Re:Ceres Garden

From: frank <fdono@sonic.net>
Sent: Thursday, October 3, 2019 4:20 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.org>
Subject: Re:Ceres Garden

Greetings,

I have been a resident of the West County for 44 years, living in Sebastopol for the past 36 years. Since my retirement last year, I have been a volunteer at the Sebastopol Ceres Project for the past 10 months, helping with the Medical Tailored Meals program on Thurs. morning. Our job is to prep and cook 2-3 meals per week for families that are recuperating or need the extra benefit of organically foods, a lot of which are grown by volunteer Teens and Adults at the Sebastopol Ceres garden. I watch the teens as they learn to not only prep, but cook the food brought in from the Ceres Farm. I am also planning to volunteer this fall at the Sebastopol garden, once my own garden is complete, and assist with the winter prep and crop harvest.

Having grown up just outside New York City, I know I now can always find joy with every tomato I munch on, and every onion and potato that suddenly emerges, like magic from the rich composted soil in my own garden. Our youth need that opportunity to also feel the soil between their fingers, and watch healthy veggies thrive, knowing that their work helps people in need.

The Garden is an integral part of Ceres' program, where youth learn to grow the food they cook in the kitchen. The garden is a place where youth who aren't able to thrive in our high-intensity kitchen environment find a peaceful, calming environment, as I have to connect with their peers, adult mentors and the natural world.

I can hope that City Ventures will find a creative way to include the intact garden, with a minimum size of 1 acre, in their plans for development of the property. Sebastopol has a long history and strong culture of supporting local volunteer agencies and providing a healthy environment for all to thrive.

Thank you for your consideration,

Frank Dono, REHS

7845 Scotts Vista Ln

Kari Svanstrom

Subject: FW: Ceres Garden

From: Christine Dreyer <cadreyer@sonic.net>
Sent: Monday, October 7, 2019 9:52 AM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.org>
Subject: Ceres Garden

Good Morning Sebastopol City Council Members,

I am writing to voice my support for including the Ceres Organic Vegetable Garden as a part of the new development plans.

My 30 year experience as an educator for SCOE and SRCS has allowed me to learn the importance in providing a meaningful and personal learning environment for our youth. The beauty of an educational program like Ceres is manifold :

1. students learn to grow organic, healthy food
2. they can apply these to their individual health and that of their families
3. they are able to thrive in an environment conducive to their learning style
4. they see that they are part of the greater community, and experience the fulfillment of giving back
5. overall self value and that of the greater good becomes part of their lives

What a perfect example of synergy!

Let's make our community here in Sebastopol a model for all in how to become caring and responsible citizens.

Sincerely,
Chris Dreyer

Christine Dreyer
cadreyer@sonic.net

Kari Svanstrom

Subject: FW: Ceres Project Community Garden

From: Pam Neuberg <amaandpapa@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, October 7, 2019 9:14 AM

To: samantha@cityventures.com; City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.org>; Krystle Rizzi <planningtemp@cityofsebastopol.org>

Cc: sara@ceresproject.org

Subject: Ceres Project Community Garden

Hello,

Ceres Project and it's garden is a valuable asset to our community at large. I am hopeful that City Ventures will create a project that will address the community's needs and concerns.

The garden is a place where over 200 of our youth to learn to grow organic food sustainably. Our teens learn the importance of healthy food for people with acute illnesses and for themselves and their families. It provides about 6,000 pounds of produce annually! Everyone is welcome to come and enjoy it.

I urge our city council and City Ventures to find a good solution that will protect at least one acre of this garden intact.

Thank you ,

Pam and Joel Neuberg

Sent from my iPad

Pam Neuberg



EaL Grow. Learn.

Sebastopol Planning Commission

October 4, 2019

The School Garden Network is a Sonoma County 501c3 non-profit organization that supports healthy students, schools, families and communities through garden-based education.

We have recently learned of the proposed housing development by City Ventures on the site of the wonderful Ceres Community Garden. While we understand the importance of providing adequate housing in our community, we hope that a creative solution might allow the Ceres Community Garden to continue to operate at their current site.

As you are surely aware of, the Ceres Community Garden is an incredible program that provides teens with the opportunity to participate in a meaningful service program growing organic produce that gets transformed into healthy nourishing meals for seriously ill people suffering from cancer and heart disease. There are tremendous benefits of having youth in gardens, learning how to tend the soil, growing healthy foods for their community, and learning about the natural world. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that this experience has changed many lives of those who have participated.

Garden programs like this take many years to develop, and in this case 8 years. Hundreds of yards of compost and mulch have been spread. Countless volunteer hours have gone into building all the garden infrastructure. And now the garden today is in its prime, demonstrating what biodiversity, year round food production, and a highly functioning space for education, cooking and community gathering can look like. Moving this well established garden will set the program back many years, Thriving gardens cannot be installed overnight. Sure, erecting new infrastructure and moving plants, although often costly and time consuming, is straightforward and the results can be seen immediately. Building healthy soil and mitigating the effects of climate, on the other-hand, cannot. These require years of committing to healthy and sustainable practices and deeply understanding the value and interconnections between healthy soil, healthy food and a healthy food system,

The School Garden Network has directly benefited from this wonderful garden, and we repeatedly promote it to our school garden partners as an educational model for diversity and production . We have used the garden site to host many professional development workshops for teachers (we have one scheduled November 2019) as well as a training site for our Teen Apprenticeship Program. We also use the garden as a pick-up site for schools collecting free plants donated by local nurseries.

We sincerely hope that we can find a path forward that would provide for critical housing needs and allow the Ceres Community Garden to remain in its current location.

Sincerely,

Laurel Anderson, Board President & Sue Davis, Director

Kari Svanstrom

From: City Council
Sent: Thursday, October 03, 2019 3:52 PM
To: Michael Carnacchi; Neysa Hinton; Patrick Slayter (ps.sebcc@gmail.com); sarahgurney.seb@gmail.com; Una Glass
Cc: Lawrence McLaughlin; Kari Svanstrom
Subject: FW: Ceres garden

Please see email below.

-----Original Message-----

From: Monique Rubin <rubinseb@sonic.net>
Sent: Thursday, October 3, 2019 1:19 PM
To: Krystle Rizzi <planningtemp@cityofsebastopol.org>
Cc: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.org>
Subject: Ceres garden

To whom it may concern,

As a citizen of Sebastopol for the last 33 years, I strongly urge you to keep in mind the importance of the Ceres garden for our city.

Not only does this garden provide organic food for the meals Ceres prepares for people with critical health issues , but it also teaches skills and improves the confidence of our teenagers who work there.

Additionally, organic methods of tilling the soil are not only healthy for our city and it's citizens, but also help sequester carbon. In the age of climate change, that is a critical consideration.

I understand the need for housing. It is a huge issue in our county. Please make sure it is done in a way that benefits us all, and does not destroy a valuable asset to our city.

Sincerely,
Monique Rubin.
Sent from my iPhone